

Red Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

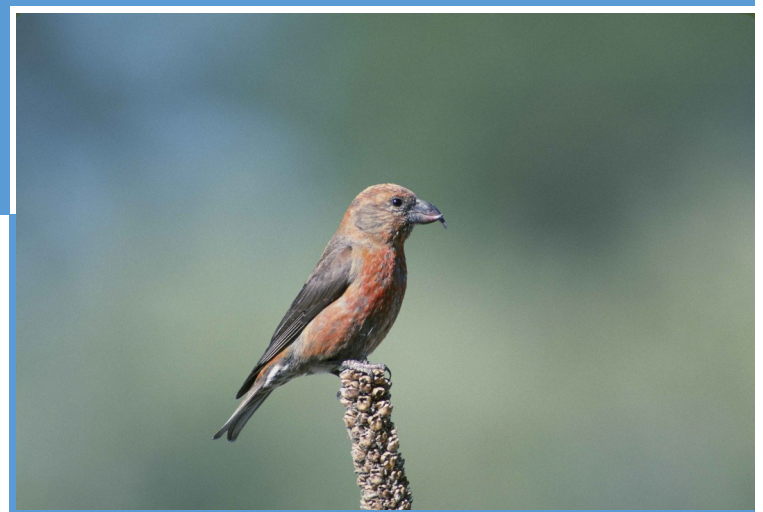
Description

The Red Crossbill is a stocky finch with a heavy head and a short, notched tail. Males are reddish-scarlet or reddish-yellow except for their dark wings and tail while females are olive-grey to greenish yellow with plain dark wings. This songbird is common in the mountain and foothills regions of Alberta year round and it is considered a global species. The Red Crossbill's range is hard to define and its population is hard to monitor because their movements are irregular and based on food availability. The tips of its large bill are crossed; an adaption for removing seeds from tight closed cones. Their biting muscles are stronger than the muscles to open the bill so it places the tips of its slightly open bill under a cone scale and then bites down. These birds are often heard but are rarely seen. They will come to feeders to eat niger and small seeds but the best way to tempt this elusive bird is to allow them to take sunflower seeds directly from the sunflower heads.

FUN FACTS



- You can spot this songbird by their undulating flight which is noticeable even when flying at great heights.
- Red Crossbills are considered irregular breeders; they breed whenever they can find a large crop of cones.
- Because of their irregular breeding, the timeframes for their lifecycle vary greatly. Some young are born in the winter.
- Because of their dependence on food supply they often occupy an area in large numbers.




If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal in distress, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at **403-214-1312** for tips, instructions and advice, or visit the website for more information www.calgarywildlife.org



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